



Press Release

How does music influence driving style?

More speeding violations with rocking rhythms

- ▶ Music in the car tends to increase reaction time
- ▶ Stimulating music can cause you to drive faster
- ▶ Emotional songs often capture attention

Music and driving are a dream team – or are they? Can music distract from traffic events, can it affect driving or reaction time? “Music does not pass drivers by without leaving a trace. As studies show, it not only arouses emotions but can also contribute to a neglect of duty of care, for example as a result of distraction”, says DEKRA traffic psychologist Dr. Thomas Wagner. This means music exerts a clear influence on driving behavior.

Music in the car leads to longer reaction times – for example, if a deer suddenly jumps onto the roadway, as psychologists from the University of Zurich, Switzerland, found in a study. Surprisingly, it didn't matter whether the audio system was playing relaxing sounds or stimulating rhythms.

Another proven effect: drivers who push themselves with fast rhythms tend to drive faster and exceed the speed limit more often than those with softer sounds in the background. “With fast rhythms, there is a risk that drivers get emotionally carried away by the music and step on the gas pedal harder in an elevated mood”, Wagner said.

Diligence in driving diminished

“Music is usually a mood enhancer, but it can also reduce care while driving”, the psychologist explains. At higher volume levels, it can greatly distract from traffic events, especially if the songs are associated with personal emotions and memories. “Whenever attention is taken up by the music, there is less mental capacity left for driving.”

The DEKRA expert therefore recommends: “Don't let your favorite songs push you too hard at the wheel, choose a reasonable volume and turn it down especially in more demanding driving situations, such as when overtaking.” Some modern vehicles already automatically switch the music system to mute mode when reversing.

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However, if music in the car is too loud, it can not only be distracting, but also affect road safety in other ways. The volume level should never be so high that warning signals from other road users or the siren of emergency services or the police can no longer be heard.

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About DEKRA

DEKRA was originally founded in 1925 to ensure road safety through vehicle inspection. With a much wider scope today, DEKRA is the world's largest independent non-listed expert organization in the testing, inspection, and certification sector. As a global provider of comprehensive services and solutions, we help our customers improve their safety, security, and sustainability outcomes. In 2022, DEKRA generated sales totaling nearly EUR 3.8 billion. The company currently employs almost 49,000 people who offer qualified and independent expert services in approximately 60 countries on five continents. With a platinum rating from EcoVadis, DEKRA is now in the top one percent of sustainable businesses ranked.